



February 27, 2015

**Testimony of Jean Horn Caron to the Appropriations Committee Opposing Cuts to the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders and Alzheimer's Respite Care**

Good evening, Chairwomen Walker, Bye, and Ranking members Miner and Kane,

My name is Jean Horn Caron. I am an advocacy volunteer lead with AARP and also a caregiver for my 95-year old mom. Between these two roles I am working full time in my retirement. Three years ago, my mother was in extremely good health and living independently. That was until she had a massive heart attack. She was hospitalized for several weeks. The hospital staff told me to "say goodbye," but true to her strong Hungarian roots--she rallied. After being in a nursing home for a month, she was discharged and living independently again. However, this ordeal left her considerably weaker, needing a walker and cane to get around and more supports than I alone could not provide. Thankfully, my mom qualified for Category 1 of the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders. And, it is because of this program that she can live independently today.

I am experiencing the value of the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders first hand. Through the program, my mom receives help with everyday activities, including Meals on Wheels, Life Alert, cleaning and laundry services, rides to appointments and VNA visits to fill med boxes and check vitals. We were also informed that if her needs increase, she would be eligible for additional services. I have the peace of mind to know that she is safe. I am grateful for these services and the support many of you have shown in the past. We need your help again this year, more than ever.

Unfortunately, despite a strong track-record of providing cost-effective, high quality services, the CT Home Care Program for Elders is again under attack. The Governor's budget would more than double home care costs for thousands of at-risk seniors. The co-pay for basic services would spike from 7% to 15%, potentially costing low-income seniors more than \$200 per month. Those with the greatest need face the steepest cut, and their choice to remain independent at home will be in jeopardy.

Additionally, the Governor recommends closing one portion (Category One) of the CT Home Care Program entirely. That means that in the future, seniors just like my mom will have no way to get affordable services at home. And, without new intake, the entire program will be eliminated over time.

The Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders remains one of the most effective nursing home diversion programs in the state. It provides care to seniors at risk of nursing home placement without requiring them to first go into a nursing home, as is the case with Money Follows the Person. It also allows Connecticut to stretch limited state resources by serving thousands of seniors at a fraction of the cost, Medicaid would otherwise pay for institutional care.

AARP does not believe seniors should be forced from their home simply to get the services and care they need. Please help seniors age with dignity in the setting of their choice. Reject Governor Malloy's misguided cuts to the CT Home Care Program for Elders and the Alzheimer's Respite Care Program. Thank you.